

ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET				
SUBJECT: (Optional) Monthly Report -- Bangkok Bureau				
FROM: Chief, Operations Group		EXTENSION <div></div>	NO. DATE September 1988	
TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)	DATE		OFFICER'S INITIALS	COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)
	RECEIVED	FORWARDED		
1. C/DRD	11/18/88			<div></div>
2. C/WSS	11/21			
3. C/ICCS				
4.				
5. Managing Editor	11/21			
6. FE Branch				
7. ME/AF Branch	11/22			
8. WE/LA Branch	11/22			
9. USSR/EE Branch	11/22			
10.				
11. C/Prod				
12.				
13.				
14.				
15. Retain/Destroy				

5 October 1988
 FBIS-3220-88

MEMORANDUM FOR: Director, Foreign Broadcast Information Service
 THROUGH: Chief, Operations Group
 SUBJECT: Monthly Report -- Bangkok Bureau -- September 1988

I. GENERAL

A. It was business as usual during September despite the fact that the bureau's normal complement of 9 Americans was down by 3 the entire month, and 4 for half the month while the chief was attending the Bureau Chiefs Conference in Headquarters. With Chief Engineer [redacted] retirement on 31 August, local Assistant Engineer [redacted] has been capably maintaining the bureau's equipment, and will be doing so until a replacement for [redacted] reports for duty sometime next summer. The person the bureau front office staffers miss most, however, is [redacted] wife and the former bureau part-time secretary, [redacted] since they are now tasked with all the typing, filing, wrapping, pouching, and embassy runs that she routinely handled. Hopefully, the processing of [redacted] replacement will be completed shortly. In the meantime, the editorial staff has been ably coping with its heavy workload despite being short one person since mid-July. However, they are looking forward to this gap being filled as soon as new Editor [redacted] who arrived on the 29th, familiarizes himself with bureau operations.

STAT
 STAT
 SIAI

STAT
 STAT

STAT

STAT

B. As if being short-handed wasn't enough, the Bang Ping receiver site suffered a major disaster in the wee hours of 23 September when lightning scored a direct hit on one of the 13.5-meter satellite dishes during a heavy thunder storm. The local guard who witnessed the strike must have thought that E.T. was finally calling home as he said the entire dish glowed and was wreathed in crackling blue fire for several seconds as the bolt surged through the antenna and cables and into the building, destroying or damaging thousands of dollars worth of equipment in its path. After assessing the damage, Assistant Engineer [redacted] and the Bang Ping techs quickly replaced what parts they could, ordered those they couldn't from Headquarters, and through spit and bailing wire, fully restored coverage by permanently placing one dish on the 60E satellite and operating the other manually.

STAT

II. OPERATIONS

A. Monitorial/Editorial

1. Burma continued to be the focus of attention as the two-person Burmese section admirably continued its sign-on to sign-off 7-day a week coverage, which they've been doing for more than two months now, at times even listening and processing at home on personal computers to keep up with ongoing events. They were also able to do a number of items from Burmese papers obtained from people coming out of Burma. The section accounted for one-sixth of the bureau's monthly publishable wordage, or 122,500 words. Some relief is in sight for them though, as a third Burmese monitor was brought on board on the 26th on a 3-month contract to at least help out in covering newscasts. The section's endeavors have continued to receive the praise of BBC and Headquarters, including a well done passed on from "On High."

Coverage of Burma took on a new twist when the opposition somehow managed to interfere with Rangoon Domestic Service programming on several occasions, possibly by means of a ham radio located somewhere between Rangoon and Bangkok. During brief pauses in key speeches or statements being aired, a male Burmese voice could be faintly heard in the background calling for freedom and denouncing the present government. On one occasion in particular, following an appeal for calm to parents and teachers by the education minister, the voice was heard to utter obscenities directed against Ne Win, Saw Maung and the government before the announcer's voice overrode him.

2. Locally, the crash of a Air Vietnam jetliner while attempting to land at Bangkok airport kept bureau personnel busy informing various embassy consumers of the details until it was learned that no Americans were on board. TV coverage of the crash, which killed 76 people--including the SRV health minister, the new SRV ambassador to the Philippines, and the Indian ambassador to the SRV--was particularly gruesome, with scenes of rival rescue teams arguing over who saw which bodies first and had the right to haul them out of the swamp the plane ended up in. It was speculated that the pilot chose to fly through a heavy thunderstorm during his approach rather than go around again because he was intentionally low on fuel coming from fuel-scarce Vietnam and intended to gas up upon his arrival here. The pilot came through it virtually unscathed.

B. Communications

1. GE and LEC contractors spent a week at the bureau in search of the reasons for the numerous LAN crashes the FBA system has been experiencing. While they were not able to isolate the problem, they did determine that it was not software related and that none of the files had been corrupted or modified. The bureau has obtained a power disturbance analyzer and has begun monitoring the power supply to see if that might be the cause of the problem.

2. The engineers conducted a successful IDD test with

Okinawa Bureau on 19 September.

3. At the request of Headquarters, the Advanced Facsimile Program modem was installed at Bang Ping 26 September so that the contractor located in the United States could conduct loopback testing without the bureau's intervention to determine the quality of the telephone line between here and CONUS. After a couple of false starts and adjustments, the actual test took place on 30 September. The bureau is waiting for Headquarters to inform it of the results.

4. On 16 separate days during the month, the bureau experienced circuit outages due to such varied reasons as the weather, satellite problems, bad modems, accidentally unplugged modems at Embassy commo, and testing. Since both our primary and altroute circuits go through one of the Embassy commo units, when one goes down they usually both go down.

C. Lateral Services

1. In addition to feeding a live Rangoon newscast to BBC almost daily via phone, the bureau had the following requests for Burma coverage:

A. BBC's "London Today" program called to ask if we could feed them a recording of a Rangoon cast, but after being told that BBC was already receiving a cast live, decided to cancel their request and do some checking in-house.

B. VOA requested a phone patch of a Rangoon in English newscast on 16 September for airing on its newscast, and on four other occasions picked up tapes of the casts at the bureau for the same reason.

2. The Swedish Embassy was added as a consumer of material on Indochina and Burma following a request from an Embassy component.

3. Various requests were fulfilled from Embassy consumers, BBC, and AG.

D. Technical

1. The new Hewlett Packard printers were installed in the commo and editorial rooms, but it was found that the box of ribbons to be used with them were the wrong size and had to be returned.

2. In addition to the equipment that had to be sent back to Washington for replacement or repair following the lightning strike, the following equipment was returned for repair: a microwave card, the ROSET S-band receiver SMR-1100 RC, and the Analyst satellite dish ACU.

E. Cruising

1. A live "Television Bridge" between the FRG and PRC was observed on the 63E Intelsat on 4 September. The program consisted

of a moderator and group of viewers at each end of the "Bridge" with a dialogue between the moderators and questions and answers by the viewers followed by translations into each other's languages.

2. On 1 September an unscheduled passfeed between Hong Kong and the PRC was observed on the 66E Intelsat carrying interviews with the survivors of the 31 August plane crash at Hong Kong airport.

3. Ethiopian domestic television in English and Amharic was observed from 21 September on the 66E Intelsat.

4. To the delight of bureau personnel, various passfeeds emanating from Seoul were observed on the 63E Intelsat throughout the Olympics. Now if we could just locate the Redskins games.

III. ADMINISTRATION

A. Personnel

1. The bureau chief hosted a retirement luncheon for NIA Deputy Director Major General Banthoeng Amatayakun on 14 September at the Landmark Hotel. Among those attending was NIA Director Ataya Paaopanchon.

2. After 15 years of fighting the Bangkok traffic, Driver [redacted] received a promotion to FSN-4.

STAT

3. After 17 years of fighting the snakes at Bang Ping, Guard [redacted] was promoted to FSN-4.

STAT

IV. VISITS

A. To the Bureau

1. GE Contractor [redacted] 8-14 September and LEC Contractor [redacted] 8-17 September to investigate LAN crashes in the FBA system.

STAT

STAT

2. Daily Report Editor [redacted] on 29 September while on private travel prior to reporting for editorial training at Seoul Bureau.

STAT

B. From the Bureau

1. Bureau Chief [redacted] on TDY to Headquarters 15 September-2 October to attend the Bureau Chiefs Conference.

STAT

STAT

[redacted]
Chief, Bangkok Bureau